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031502Z Mar 01

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	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8337
INFO NSC WASHDC
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000898

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JFRAZER
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SUBJECT: A LOOMING SPECIAL CONGRESS COULD DETERMINE THE
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FATE OF ZIMBABWE'S COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D' AFFAIRES EARL M. IRVING FOR
REASONS 1.5 (B/D).

REF: A. HARARE 815, B. HARARE 743

SUMMARY

1. (C) ON FEBRUARY 28, ECONOFF MET WITH COLLIN CLOETE, VICE-PRESIDENT FOR COMMODITIES OF THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION (CFU), TO DISCUSS THE UPCOMING MARCH 21 CFU SPECIAL CONGRESS AND REPORTS OF VEHEMENT DISAGREEMENTS AT THE UNION'S TOP LEADERSHIP LEVEL. CLOETE, A KEY MEMBER OF THE CFU EXECUTIVE, TOLD US THAT THE SPECIAL CONGRESS WILL CENTER ON CONSIDERING WAYS THAT THE CFU CAN BROADEN ITS MEMBERSHIP AND INTEGRATE BETTER INTO ZIMBABWE'S BLACK MAJORITY SOCIETY, AS WELL AS TO CONSIDER DIFFERENT WAYS TO ENGAGE THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE (GOZ) ON LAND REFORM. CLOETE CLAIMED, NOT ENTIRELY CONVINCINGLY, THAT THE CONGRESS WILL NOT CONSIDER A WHOLESALERE CHANGE IN THE CFU LEADERSHIP. HE STATED THAT THE CFU COUNCIL HAS ALREADY AGREED THAT THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP WILL REMAIN UNTIL THE ANNUAL CFU ELECTIONS IN AUGUST, AND ADDED THAT THE SPECIAL CONGRESS WILL NOT ENDORSE THE GOZ "FAST-TRACK" RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM. CLOETE INDICATED THAT THE ALLEGED DIVISIONS IN THE CFU MANAGEMENT THAT WERE RECENTLY COVERED IN THE PRESS WERE THE RESULT OF A FORMER CFU PRESIDENT, NICK
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SWANEPOEL, ATTEMPTING TO CUT A SECRET DEAL WITH THE GOZ ON THE LAND ISSUE (REF A). END SUMMARY.

THE NEED TO INTEGRATE THE CFU

2. (C) CLOETE SAID THAT THE CFU NOW RECOGNIZES THAT IT WAS A MISTAKE NOT TO HAVE INTEGRATED ITS MEMBERSHIP BY MERGING WITH THE INDIGENOUS COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION (ICFU), WHICH REPRESENTS BLACK COMMERCIAL FARMERS. THE SPECIAL CONGRESS IS GOING TO CONSIDER THE ISSUE OF FORMALLY APPROACHING THE ICFU TO BEGIN MERGER TALKS. CLOETE ALSO INDICATED THAT THE SPECIAL CONGRESS WILL CONSIDER WAYS FOR THE CFU TO BROADEN ITS OUTREACH AND LINKS TO BLACK ZIMBABWEAN CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS.

CHANGING THE LAND DEBATE TO THE COMMUNAL LANDS

13. (C) CLOETE INDICATED THAT THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF THE SPECIAL CONGRESS WILL BE TO BRAINSTORM ON WAYS TO ENGAGE THE GOZ AND ZIMBABWE'S BLACK MAJORITY ON THE LAND ISSUE. THIS EFFORT WILL CENTER ON HOW TO HELP MAKE THE COUNTRY'S COMMUNAL FARMING AREAS AND COMMUNAL FARMERS MORE PRODUCTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL. CLOETE POINTED OUT THAT COMMUNAL LANDS COMPRISE 42 PERCENT OF ZIMBABWE'S TOTAL LAND, AND CONTRARY TO WHAT THE GOZ STATES, THE MAJORITY OF THIS LAND IS NOT UNSUITABLE FOR AGRICULTURE, CATTLE OR GAME RANCHING. RATHER, WHAT IS NEEDED IS FOR
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COMMUNAL FARMERS TO BE GIVEN THE TRAINING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INPUTS THAT ARE NEEDED TO MAKE THESE LANDS PRODUCTIVE AND TO MOVE THEM FROM SUBSISTENCE TO COMMERCIAL FARMING. CLOETE BLAMED THE GOZ FOR NOT DOING THIS IN THE PAST, BECAUSE IT WANTED TO KEEP COMMUNAL FARMERS POOR AND WHOLLY DEPENDENT ON THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CFU SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THE LEAD IN THIS ENDEAVOR WHEN THE GOZ ABDICATED ITS RESPONSIBILITY. THE SPECIAL CONGRESS WILL ALSO CONSIDER HOW THE CFU CAN TAKE THE LEAD IN ORGANIZING A COALITION OF NGOS, INTERNATIONAL DONORS, AND HOPEFULLY THE GOZ, TO WORK ON THE ISSUE OF THE PRODUCTIVITY AND PRESERVATION OF THE COMMUNAL LANDS.

DIVISIONS REVEALED IN THE CFU

14. (C) CLOETE STATED THAT A FEBRUARY 17 ARTICLE IN THE GOZ-CONTROLLED "THE HERALD" DESCRIBING A SPLIT IN THE CFU WAS INACCURATE (REF A). ACCORDING TO CLOETE, NICK SWANEPOEL (A FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE CFU), WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OR APPROVAL OF THE CFU EXECUTIVE, CONTACTED THE GOZ TO OFFER A DEAL TO BREAK THE IMPASSE ON THE LAND ISSUE. AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOZ, SWANEPOEL

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REQUESTED THE CFU EXECUTIVE TO CONVENE A SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING, WHICH WAS HELD ON FEBRUARY 13. AT THE MEETING, SWANEPOEL REVEALED THE DEAL THAT HE HAD PRESENTED TO THE GOZ (REF A). THE COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS REGARDING THE INDEPENDENT AND UNAUTHORIZED APPROACH WERE QUITE WIDE-RANGING AND ANIMATED, AND INCLUDED THE WITHDRAWAL OF CFU AND INDIVIDUAL FARMER LAWSUITS AGAINST THE GOZ, PUBLICLY ENDORSING "FAST-TRACK", AND LOBBYING INTERNATIONAL DONORS TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM FINANCIALLY, ACCORDING TO CLOETE. SWANEPOEL THEN DROPPED THE OTHER SHOE, REVEALING THAT THE DEAL ALSO ENTAILED THE RESIGNATION OF THE CFU EXECUTIVE AND THE CHANGING OF THE NAME OF THE CFU.

15. (C) THIS LED TO A VERY HEATED DISCUSSION, WHERE

CERTAIN COUNCIL MEMBERS, LED BY SWANEPOEL, CRITICIZED THE CURRENT CFU EXECUTIVE FOR BEING PART OF THE PROBLEM FARMERS FACE IN REACHING A DEAL WITH THE GOZ TO DEFUSE THE LAND CRISIS. SWANEPOEL SINGLED OUT CFU PRESIDENT TIM HENWOOD, DIRECTOR DAVID HASLUCK, AND VICE-PRESIDENT FOR REGIONS WILLIAM HUGHES AS PEOPLE WHO HAD TO GO. AFTER AN HOUR OF HEATED DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN AND AMONGST THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, THE EXECUTIVE DECLARED THAT IF THEY WERE PART OF THE PROBLEM, AND DID NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE COUNCIL, THEY WOULD ALL RESIGN. THE EXECUTIVE MEMBERS THEN ALL WALKED OUT, AND, ACCORDING TO CLOETE, LEFT THE COUNCIL MEMBERS STUNNED. AN HOUR LATER, THE COUNCIL PHONED ALL THE EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND REQUESTED THAT THEY RETURN TO CFU

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HEADQUARTERS. WHEN THE EXECUTIVE WAS ALL PRESENT, THE COUNCIL INFORMED THEM THAT THEY DID NOT ACCEPT THEIR RESIGNATIONS AND THAT THEY CONTINUED TO RECEIVE THE FULL SUPPORT AND BACKING OF THE COUNCIL. WITH THIS VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, THE UNION LEADERSHIP DECIDED TO MOVE AHEAD BY CALLING A SPECIAL CONGRESS TO CONSIDER THE STEPS ALREADY DESCRIBED.

THE MACHIAVELLIAN MANEUVERS OF A FORMER PRESIDENT

16. (C) CLOETE STATED THAT THE DIVISIONS IN THE CFU WERE THE RESULT OF THE MACHIAVELLIAN MANEUVERS OF SWANEPOEL. HIS DEAL WITH THE GOZ WAS INDEPENDENT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVE (REF B) THAT THE CFU EXECUTIVE SUPPORTS, AND ALSO WENT BEYOND THE EXECUTIVE'S APPOINTMENT OF A SMALL GROUP OF CFU MEMBERS TO ENGAGE THE GOZ. CLOETE ALLEGED THAT SWANEPOEL HAS A HISTORY OF CONNING AGAINST CFU EXECUTIVES WITH WHOM HE DOES NOT AGREE. CLOETE CITED AN INCIDENT WHEN SWANEPOEL CONVINCED THE COUNCIL TO REMOVE A CFU PRESIDENT SO SWANEPOEL COULD COMPLETE THE REMAINDER OF THE TERM. ACCORDING TO CLOETE, SWANEPOEL TOLD THE COUNCIL AT THE FEBRUARY 13 MEETING THAT HE WAS GOING TO THE UNITED STATES TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT BUSH OVER HIS DEAL, AND HE WOULD BE RETURNING WITH US \$60 MILLION TO FUND LAND REFORM. HE ALSO ALLEGEDLY SAID THAT HE WAS AVAILABLE TO TRAVEL ANYWHERE IN ZIMBABWE TO MEET WITH FARMERS WHO WANTED TO DISCUSS HIS PLAN BECAUSE HE HAD ACCESS TO THE HELICOPTER OF ZIMBABWE ARMS DEALER JOHN BREDENKAMP.

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CLOETE ASSERTED THAT SWANEPOEL HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ZANU-PF POLITICIANS, SOCIALLY AND OTHERWISE. WE HAVE HEARD FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT SWANEPOEL IS PERHAPS THE ONLY COMMERCIAL FARMER WHOM PRESIDENT MUGABE TRUSTS. ACCORDING TO CLOETE, SWANEPOEL TOLD THE CFU COUNCIL THAT ONE OF HIS ZANU-PF CONTACTS HAD TOLD HIM THAT IT WAS TIME TO MAKE A DEAL WITH THE GOZ ON LAND, OR THERE SOON WOULD BE 300 WHITE FARMERS ROUNDED UP AND KILLED. SWANEPOEL WOULD NOT TELL THE COUNCIL WHO HAD TOLD HIM THIS OR WHO WOULD DO THIS, ONLY THAT HE WAS THE MESSENGER.

COMMENT

17. (C) ALTHOUGH CLOETE TOLD US THAT THE COUNCIL ENDED UP BACKING THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE, HIS Demeanor AND DELIVERY LEFT US LESS THAN WILLING TO BET THE FARM ON ITS CONTINUING TO DO SO. WE ASSESS SWANEPOEL'S EFFORT TO CUT A SECRET DEAL WITH THE GOZ AS ILL-TIMED AND ILL-ADVISED AND ONE THAT COULD UNDERMINE THE CFU AS AN INSTITUTION. THE CFU'S EFFORTS TO ASSIST AND ALIGN ITSELF MORE CLOSELY TO THE BLACK FARMING COMMUNITY, BOTH COMMERCIAL AND COMMUNAL, IS, AT THIS STAGE, LIKELY TOO

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LITTLE AND TOO LATE TO REDUCE THE GOZ PRESSURE ON WHITE
COMMERCIAL FARMERS, BUT NEVERTHELESS A MOVE THAT SHOULD
BE ENCOURAGED.

18. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: WE EXPECT THAT MUGABE AND
ZANU-PF WILL PURSUE ANY CRACKS IN THE UNITY OF THE CFU
TO IMPLEMENT A DIVIDE-AND-CONQUER STRATEGY AGAINST THE
UNION. WHILE WE DO NOT DISCOUNT THAT MORE WHITE FARMERS
MAY BE KILLED BEFORE THE RULE OF LAW IS RESTORED IN
ZIMBABWE, WE DO NOT TAKE AS CREDIBLE THE THREAT TO KILL
300 COMMERCIAL FARMERS. WE BELIEVE THE UPCOMING
CONGRESS MAY BE A WATERSHED EVENT, NOT FOR BREAKING THE
IMPASSE WITH MUGABE OVER LAND, BUT IN DETERMINING
WHETHER THE CFU REMAINS A UNITED ORGANIZATION
REPRESENTING COMMERCIAL FARMERS, OR ENDS UP COLLAPSING
INTO DISSENTING FACTIONS THAT WILL TRY TO CUT INDIVIDUAL
DEALS WITH THE GOZ TO SAVE THEMSELVES. END COMMENT.

IRVING

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